

Flora Thompson:

An Inventory of Her Papers at the Harry Ransom Center

Descriptive Summary

Creator:	Thompson, Flora, 1876-1947
Title:	Flora Thompson Papers
Dates:	1912-1965 (bulk 1921-1948)
Extent:	4 boxes, 1 oversize folder (1.75 linear feet)
Abstract:	The collection contains typescripts, including manuscripts for all of Thompson's published novels, as well as several unpublished works, magazine leaves, correspondence, scrapbooks, clippings, photocopies, woodcut illustrations, and photographs.
Call Number:	Manuscript Collection MS-04211
Language:	English
Access:	Open for research

Administrative Information

Acquisition:	Purchase, 1967 (R3561); Gift, 1993 (G10058)
Provenance:	The bulk of the Thompson papers were purchased in 1967 from Winifred Money, the literary executor for the estate of Winifred Thompson, Flora Thompson's daughter. Photocopies of correspondence from Flora Thompson to Arthur and Anna Ball and H.J. Massingham were donated in 1993 by Thompson biographer Gillian Lindsay.
Processed by:	Stephen Mielke, 1997
Repository:	Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin

Biographical Sketch

Flora Jane (Timms) Thompson was born December 5, 1876 (some sources state 1877), at Juniper Hill, Oxfordshire, England, to Albert Timms, a stone mason, and Emma Timms, a nursemaid. A voracious reader as a child, Flora Timms grew up with five younger siblings in a stern and impoverished household headed by an alcoholic father. At age 14, she left home to become a post office clerk in a nearby village where she continued her education through reading, writing, and observing the surrounding countryside in her off time. She worked in several post offices before meeting and marrying John Thompson, a fellow clerk, in 1903.

Flora Thompson left the postal service after her marriage and gave birth to a daughter, Winifred, in 1903 and a son, Henry, in 1909. She continued to write while raising her children and was first published after winning a literary essay contest in *The Ladies Companion* magazine. One year later her first short story appeared in the same publication. During World War I, the Thompson family moved to Liphook and Flora Thompson rejoined the post office. She gave birth to another son, Peter, in 1918, but continued to write, and in 1920 began publishing short stories in *The Catholic Fireside* magazine. In 1921 she started a series of articles titled "Out of Doors" that focused on changes in the seasons and nature conservancy. In 1922, she changed the title of these monthly essays to "The Peverel Papers," and they appeared in *The Catholic Fireside* until 1927. Thompson also wrote "The Fireside Reading Circle" series from 1923 to 1925 which focused on the study of English literature and literary figures. She ended this series when she began The Peverel Society, a correspondence club that offered literary instruction and criticism to its members from 1925 to 1941.

Thompson's first published book was a collection of poems titled *Bog Myrtle and Peat* (1921). After its publication she continued to publish journal articles and work at the post office with her husband. In 1928, the Thompsons moved to Devon and she began to focus her article writing on her childhood memories. Using these articles as a basis, she published her first novel, a fictionalized autobiography titled *Lark Rise* in 1939. She continued the biographical theme in her next two works *Over to Candleford* (1941) and *Lark Rise to Candleford* (1943). These three novels received great critical praise as historical accounts of the economic, social, and cultural life of pre-industrial rural Oxfordshire and were published under one cover in 1945 as *Lark Rise to Candleford*. Thompson's advancing age, the trials of World War II, and the death of her youngest son in the war wore heavily on her while writing these novels. She died at Devon in 1947, but not before finishing a continuation of her first three books titled *Still Glides the Stream*, published posthumously in 1948. Yet another biographical work, *Heatherly*, was written in 1944 but was not published until 1979 along with selected articles from *The Catholic Fireside* in *A Country Calendar and Other Writings*. Other Thompson articles from *The Catholic Fireside* were published in the 1986 book *The Peverel Papers*.

Sources:

Additional information on Flora Thompson and her works can be found in:

Flora Thompson: The Story of the Lark Rise Writer by Gillian Lindsay (London: Robert Hale, 1990).

Flora Thompson by Margaret Lane (London: J. Murray, 1976).

Scope and Contents

Typescripts, magazine leaves, correspondence, scrapbooks, clippings, photocopies, woodcut illustrations, and photographs reflect the literary activities of Flora Thompson from 1912 until her death in 1947. Included among these materials are items collected by Thompson's daughter, Winifred, that document the publication of Thompson's works from the time of her death up to 1965.

The papers have been organized into four series: I. Works, 1912-1948 (15 folders); II. The Peverel Society, 1936, undated (4 folders); III. Correspondence, 1921-1965, undated (bulk 1931-1947) (5 folders); and IV. Scrapbooks, 1921-1965, undated (6 folders).

The bulk of the collection, contained in the Works series, consists of typed manuscripts with handwritten editorial corrections. Included are manuscripts for all of Thompson's published novels, as well as several unpublished works. Most of these pieces are represented by one full draft manuscript, although some early draft fragments are present, as are a large number of articles that Thompson published in various magazines and later adapted for use in her novels.

The correspondence found in this collection consists mainly of photocopies of Thompson's letters to Arthur and Anna Ball from 1931 to 1947. The originals of this correspondence are held at The University of Exeter Library in England and permission to copy or quote these letters must be obtained from Exeter.

The earliest materials, dating from 1912 to 1920 are magazine articles written for *The Lady's Companion*, *The Literary Monthly*, and *The Catholic Fireside*, but the bulk of the collection coincides with the publication of Thompson's first book in 1921 through her death in 1947, and subsequent publication of *Still Glides the Stream* in 1948. Materials dating after 1947 were collected by Thompson's daughter.

Series Descriptions

Series I. Works, 1912-1948 (15 folders)

Flora Thompson's literary works are documented in this series with hand edited typescripts of her published novels *Lark Rise* (1939), *Over to Candleford* (1941), *Candleford Green* (1943), *Still Glides the Stream* (1948) and *Heatherly*, which was written in 1944 but not published until 1979 in *A Country Calendar and Other Writings*. Also present are typescripts for several unpublished and unfinished works as well as many unidentified fragments. Unfortunately, only preliminary draft fragments exist for *Lark Rise*, and there is no manuscript for her first publication, a collection of poetry titled *Bog Myrtle and Peat*. Many of the manuscripts were typed on the verso of used sheets of paper due to shortages caused by World War II.

Thompson's journalistic writing is well reflected by the presence of a large number of printed magazine short stories and articles written by Thompson between 1912 and 1927 for *The Lady's Companion*, *The Literary Monthly*, and *The Catholic Fireside*. Included in these torn-out magazine leaves are three series of articles titled "Out of Doors," "The Peverel Papers," and "The Fireside Reading Circle."

The materials in this series are arranged chronologically as novels or as articles. The materials grouped as novels are dated by their year of publication or by the approximate year they were written if unpublished. Many of the materials grouped as articles have no identifiable date, therefore they are arranged by approximate date under each publication or series title. The remaining items in the series, identified and arranged as received, consist of one 1935 desk calendar containing hand written children's poems; five undated short stories identified as "Early Free Lance Journalism"; and one folder of typed and hand written fragments labeled "Poetry and Prose."

Series II. The Peverel Society, 1936, undated (4 folders)

The materials of the Peverel Society, started in 1925 by Flora Thompson and Mildred Humble-Smith, consist largely of undated, typed short stories by Thompson and other members of the Society. Several of the Thompson stories also appeared as magazine articles. One example, "The Tail-less Fox," is present in this series in both typescript and printed form. Also found in these materials is a six-lesson verse writing course written by Thompson. The three remaining items in the series are a sheet of letterhead, an advertising brochure for the society, and *The Peverel Book of Verse*, a small book of 56 poems by Society members, selected and edited by Thompson. The materials are arranged as they were received.

Series III. Correspondence, 1921-1965, undated (bulk 1931-1947) (5 folders)

The majority of this series consists of photocopies of outgoing correspondence from Flora Thompson to Arthur and Anna Ball dated from 1931 to 1947. Thompson first began corresponding with this couple through The Peverel Society and continued to exchange letters until her death. Also present is a photocopy of one letter to H. J. Massingham discussing his introduction for *Lark Rise to Candleford*, and the original of a letter from Thompson to a Mrs. Oldacre dated 1921 (the only letter in the series written in Thompson's hand).

Incoming correspondence from 1938 to 1946 includes one 1938 letter from the illustrator Lynton Lamb regarding his work for *Lark Rise*. The remainder of the folder contains letters from Oxford University Press discussing the publication of Thompson's novels.

In addition to the Thompson correspondence there is one folder of correspondence to her daughter Winifred, from 1947 to 1965, concerning posthumous publications of Flora Thompson's works.

All outgoing correspondence is arranged alphabetically by recipient, then chronologically. The Ball correspondence contains a chronological listing in the front of its folder. Permission to copy or quote from the Ball or Massingham correspondence must be obtained from The University of Exeter in England. The remaining correspondence is arranged chronologically as incoming or as Winifred Thompson's.

Series IV. Scrapbooks, 1921-1965, undated (6 folders)

This series consists of six hand held sketch books containing clippings and notices regarding each of Thompson's published books. Five of the scrapbooks focus on one book each: *Bog Myrtle and Peat*, *Over to Candleford*, *Candleford Green*, *Lark Rise to Candleford*, and *Still Glides the Stream*. The remaining scrapbook is not titled, but focuses largely on *Lark Rise*, although it also contains materials pre-dating *Lark Rise* and post-dating Thompson's death up to 1965. Among its contents are six black and white photographs of buildings in Juniper Hill taken in the early 1950s, and woodcut prints by Joan Hassall, Lynton Lamb, and Julie Neild.

The *Lark Rise to Candleford* scrapbook contains clippings relating to that novel, obituaries for Flora Thompson and two letters to her daughter Winifred. The *Still Glides the Stream* scrapbook holds review clippings and four black and white photographs of Juniper Hill buildings, all of which post date Thompson's death. It is likely that Winifred Thompson created the scrapbooks that contain materials post-dating Flora Thompson's death and may have created them all.

The scrapbooks are arranged in chronological order according to the earliest material contained in each.

Related Material

The correspondence found in this collection consists mainly of photocopies of Thompson's letters to Arthur and Anna Ball from 1931 to 1947. The originals of this correspondence are held at The University of Exeter Library in England, and permission to copy or quote these letters must be obtained from Exeter.

Index Terms

People

Brown, Evelyn Scott.

Lamb, Lynton.

Lane, Margaret.

Subjects

Authors, English, 20th century.

Country life, England, History, 19th century.

Places

Hampshire (England), Social life and customs.

Oxfordshire (England), Social life and customs.

Document Types

Scrapbooks.

Photographs.

Series I. Works, 1912-1948

Novels

Gates of Eden, ca. 1933

Chapters 1-8

Box 1 Folder 1

Chapters 9-18

Folder 2

Chapters 19-29

Folder 3*Lark Rise* (1939)

Preliminary draft fragments

Box 1 Folder 4*Over to Candleford* (1941)**Folder 5***Candleford Green* (1943)Preliminary draft fragments (also includes fragments of *Heatherly* and *Still Glides the Stream*)**Box 1
Folder
6***Dashpers*, ca. 1944**Folder 7***Heatherly*, ca. 1944

Chapters 1-6

Box 1 Folder 8

Chapters 7-11

Folder 9

Preliminary draft fragments (see also box 1 folder 6)

**Folder
10-11***Still Glides the Stream* (1948)

Chapters 1-4

Box 2 Folder 1

Chapters 5-13

Folder 2

Preliminary draft fragments (see also box 1 folder 6)

Folder 3

The Stithy, undated

Folder 4

Unidentified fragments, undated

Folder 5

Articles

<i>The Lady's Companion</i> , 1912-1914	Box 2 Folder 6
<i>The Literary Monthly</i> [1913]	Folder 7
<i>The Catholic Fireside</i> , 1920, undated	Folder 8
"Out of Doors," 1921	Folder 9
"The Peverel Papers," ca. 1922-1927	Folder 10
"The Fireside Reading Circle," ca. 1923-25	Folder 11
"The Silent Piano," undated	Folder 12
Children's Poems, 1935?	Box 3 Folder 1
Early freelance journalism, undated	Folder 2
Poetry & Prose, undated	Folder 3

Series II. The Peverel Society, 1936, undated

Stories, 1936, undated	Box 3 Folder 4
Verse writing course, undated	Folder 5
<i>The Peverel Book of Verse</i> , undated	Folder 6
Miscellaneous, undated	Folder 7

Series III. Correspondence, 1921-1965, undated (bulk 1931-1947)

Ball, 1931-1947, undated	Box 3 Folder 8
Massingham, 1944	Folder 9
Oldacre, 1921	Folder 10
Incoming, 1938-1946, undated	Folder 11
Winifred Thompson, 1947-1965, undated	Folder 12

Series IV. Scrapbooks, 1921-1965, undated

<i>Bog Myrtle and Peat</i> , 1921	Box 4 Folder 1
[<i>Lark Rise</i>], 1921-1965, undated	Folder 2
<i>Over to Candleford</i> , 1941	Folder 3
<i>Candleford Green</i> , 1943	Folder 4
<i>Lark Rise to Candleford</i> , 1945-1950	Folder 5
<i>Still Glides the Stream</i> , 1948-1950	Folder 6

Flora Thompson Papers--Index of Correspondents

Names in bold appear in the RLIN record.

- **Brown, Evelyn Scott** [to Winifred Thompson]--3.12
- Cumberlege, Geoffrey (Oxford University Press)--3.11, 3.12
- Humphreys, Paul (British Broadcasting Corp.) [to Winifred Thompson]--4.5
- **Lamb, Lynton**--3.11
- **Lane, Margaret** [to Winifred Thompson]--3.12
- Lister, Louise [to Winifred Thompson]--4.5
- Money, Winifred [to Lady Huntingdon/Margaret Lane]--1.8
- Morris, M.E.L. (University Microfilms, Ltd.) [to Winifred Thompson]--3.12
- Thompson, Winifred [to unidentified]--4.2
- Williams, John L. (Oxford University Press) [to Winifred Thompson]--3.12